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ABSTRACT

The report describes a sample of effective vocational assessment practices for handicapped students implemented in California. An introduction presents the challenges and difficulties of complying with federal and state legislation that mandate nondiscriminatory vocational assessment and the least restrictive placement. Alternatives to standardized vocational testing are considered (such as work samples and job performance assessments). Common practices are cited regarding assessment instruments, examiner expertise, and coordination of services. Potential improvements are also pointed out. Six projects are described in terms of critical issues, implementation/maintenance, outcomes, resources required (staff, equipment, training, and funds), and suggestions for improvement. Practices address such areas as job performance assessment, criterion referenced assessment, use of paraprofessionals to conduct assessments, and coordination of services between a department of rehabilitation and a school district's department of special education. (CL)

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Critical Issues and Promising Practices

Career/Vocational Assessment

of California Secondary Students with Exceptional Needs

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A cooperative effort of the
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We extend a special note of appreciation to the educators who spent a considerable amount of time describing and discussing their programs with us. Because we are unable to include a description of every site we visited, we suggest that you contact these educators for information about the practices implemented in their programs:

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Foreword

Each year billions of dollars are paid in benefits to handicapped individuals, many of whom, with help, could become tax-paying, productive workers. I do not mean to imply that we should help the handicapped only to save money. What I am saying, however, is that common decency and common sense dictate that we help handicapped persons become independent whenever possible.

A recent study has shown that, of 105 mentally retarded students who received vocational training in the public schools of Texas and Colorado, the average student would repay the cost of the training through income taxes after ten years of work. In another study in Wisconsin, it was found that medically handicapped persons would return $25 in increased lifetime earnings for each dollar spent on vocational rehabilitation. In addition, 89 percent of the physically disabled, emotionally disturbed, and mentally retarded persons in Wisconsin who received help were able to move from the welfare rolls to gainful employment—at an estimated savings of $200,000 per year.

Special education can also benefit persons who are too severely handicapped to work. The retarded person who would otherwise be institutionalized can lead a more meaningful life if special training can equip that person to live at home. And, with training, others can lead fairly independent lives in group homes. The benefits to society as a result of such training programs are obvious.

Although dollars and cents are important, the most compelling reason for providing services to the handicapped is the worth of the individual—the cornerstone of our way of life. I believe everyone wants to be looked upon as a productive member of society. We must give each handicapped person the chance to become an integral part of society. Opportunity is what is needed.

Opportunity is what the authors of this publication wish to provide to the handicapped. In their words the purpose of career/vocational assessment is to provide:

> . . . an opportunity for the student to explore his or her potential in relation to work. . . . Assessment is considered part of a counseling and guidance process designed to assist the student in making realistic career choices.

I hope you find this publication useful and that, as a result, you are able to help handicapped persons to become more productive and more independent than they might otherwise have been. Such a result will benefit all of us.

Bill Honig

Superintendent of Public Instruction

Preface

A major responsibility of the Regional Resource Center West (RRCW) is to assist the Arizona, California, Hawaii, and Nevada state offices of special education in their efforts to implement programs for every special education student. Toward this end the RRCW conducted a detailed needs assessment in cooperation with the Office of Special Education, California State Department of Education.

In its continuing effort to improve the quality of career/vocational education services available to secondary students with exceptional needs, the Office of Special Education requested the identification of promising career/vocational assessment practices. This report was developed in response to that request. The staffs of the RRCW and the California State Department of Education's Program Quality Review Unit described the critical issues and identified the promising practices included in the report.

Critical issues pertaining to career/vocational assessment were identified through a review of the literature and interviews conducted with practitioners. Promising practices which addressed the critical issues were verified through site visits and staff interviews. The interviews were supplemented by tours and program observations and review of materials, products, and administrative procedures. Site nominations were provided by state educational agency personnel as well as personnel from the nominated sites.

The criteria used to select promising practices included the following:

- Does the practice address an identified critical issue?
- Is the practice unique?
- Is replication of the practice feasible?
- What evidence of effectiveness is available?
- Does the practice represent a cost-effective approach?

This report, which includes descriptions of a sampling of the effective vocational assessment practices being implemented in California and across the nation, is being disseminated by the Office of Special Education, California State Department of Education. Information about the verified promising practices is being disseminated by the Regional Resource Center Network (RCCW). In conjunction with providing technical assistance to state education agencies, the RRCW is participating in a Regional Resource Center systemwide effort to identify and publicize effective practices in the education of handicapped students.

The career/vocational assessment of secondary-level students with exceptional needs is a priority for state education agencies throughout the country. This report is designed to help state and local education personnel implement career/vocational education services for all handicapped students.

JAMES R. SMITH
Deputy Superintendent
for Programs

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Assistant Superintendent and Director
Office of Special Education

Introduction

Importance

In the past decade the career and vocational education of students with exceptional needs has received increasing attention. The inclusion of students with exceptional needs in career/vocational education programs has increased most recently in response to several developments. Surveys conducted in junior and senior high schools confirm that students are not being taught independent living skills or the specific technical skills needed to become employable. Other studies indicate that the unemployment rate among disabled persons far exceeds the unemployment rate among the rest of society. Furthermore, many who do hold jobs are in marginal positions, often working below their capability. In response to these situations, state and federal legislation mandated the provision of career and vocational services for disabled students.

Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, requires the development and implementation of an individualized education program (IEP) for each disabled student. The IEP sets forth appropriate educational goals for the handicapped student and identifies the types of services that are to be provided to foster attainment of those goals.

Public Law 94-482, Vocational Education Amendments of 1976, mandated that vocational goals and services must be planned and coordinated as part of the student's IEP. At appropriate times in the student's education, the IEP must include valid and reliable career or vocational information. This information is to serve as a basis for (1) the formulation of the student's vocational goals and objectives; (2) placement decisions; and (3) decisions about needed curricular adaptations. Vocational services available to handicapped students under this law include vocational instruction; curriculum development and modification to enable handicaped students to take part in regular programs; modification of vocational equipment to enable students to develop skills leading to employment; vocational or work evaluation; supportive services, such as those provided by interpreters, notetakers, readers, or tutorial aides; vocational guidance and counseling; and job placement and follow-up services.

Section 504 of Public Law 93-112, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, is the third legislative measure that forms the basis for the provision of vocational services for handicapped individuals. This act is a civil rights law. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of handicap in any private or public program receiving federal financial assistance. The effect of this legislation on the career/vocational education

of handicapped students is that they can no longer be excluded from such programs because they are handicapped.

Recent state legislation adds responsibilities in the areas of assessment and IEP development. Education Code Section 56320(f) requires an *assessment of the suspected handicapped pupil in the areas of career abilities and interests.* As of January 1, 1983, Education Code Section 56345(b)(1) and (2) per SB 2652 states:

> When appropriate, the individualized education program shall also include, but not be limited to, all of the following:
>
> (1) Prevocational career education for pupils in kindergarten and grades one to six, inclusive, or pupils of comparable chronological age
>
> (2) Vocational education, career education or work experience education, or any combination thereof, in preparation for remunerative employment, including independent living skill training for pupils in grades seven to twelve inclusive, or comparable chronological age, who require differential proficiency standards pursuant to Section 51215

In accordance with these laws, handicapped youngsters must receive, to the greatest extent possible, vocational education in regular vocational classrooms, along with the supportive services and aids they need to succeed. In order to provide handicapped students with appropriate vocational education programs, accurate and relevant vocational assessment information about each student must be available. The nondiscriminatory assessment standards and procedures mandated by Public Law 94-142 for general psychoeducational assessment also pertain to vocational education assessment. (See the appendix for the specific provisions mandated by these regulations.)

Currently, accurate and comprehensive vocational assessment takes place in only a few school programs. However, educators are beginning to incorporate accurate career/vocational assessment as an integral part of instructional programming. The necessity for systematic, long-range career/vocational assessment of the disabled student is imperative. The student's abilities and vocational potential should be reassessed as he or she explores career and vocational choices. The consequences of not providing accurate assessment are sobering in light of the impact this can have on a student's future employment opportunities.

Unemployment or marginal employment for disabled persons places an economic burden on society as well as on the families of these individuals. The situation leads to the waste of talent and fosters dependency and idleness.

Difficulties

Although the legislation mandating vocational services for disabled students is quite extensive, numerous problems impede the implementation of those services. An examination of the issues relating to accurate and comprehensive career/vocational assessment of secondary students is important. Further, an examination of promising practices that address these issues can assist others to identify and meet the vocational needs of disabled students.

Issues

Purpose of Career/Vocational Assessment

The purpose of career/vocational assessment must be clearly understood before any assessment activities are undertaken. Influenced by this clear understanding will be the selection, implementation, and interpretation of the activities, which can improve a student's chances for future employment.

Many educators view the purpose of career/vocational assessment as an opportunity for the student to explore his or her potential in relation to work. In this view assessment is considered part of a counseling and guidance process designed to assist the student in making realistic career choices. This comprehensive approach may begin in the junior high school or earlier.

This exploratory, student-centered approach to assessment appears to be most appropriate for disabled students, many of whom have incomplete or distorted perceptions of the work environment.

Examples of this approach may be found in Riverside County and at the Rancho Los Amigos Hospital in Downey. The Career and Vocational Education Unit in the Office of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools conducts a student-centered assessment process that enables a student to expand the range of occupations he or she considers. Emphasis is placed on the student discussion itself rather than on the assessment of results. In this approach the purpose of the assessment process is to obtain guidance information for a student to consider. Prescriptions for specific occupational choices are not offered. At the Rehabilitation Training and Evaluation Program at the Rancho Los Amigos Hospital, the staff performs a career/vocational assessment that involves the systematic gathering of information and the making of decisions. The purpose is to assist individuals to learn more about themselves in relation to the work environment.

Assessment Instruments and Procedures

Career/vocational assessment encompasses a variety of informal and formal evaluations of the interests, abilities, and work-related temperament of a student. Through this process a student gains a greater understanding of his or her interests, abilities, and the work environment best suited to him or her. Assessment procedures include paper and pencil tests, manipulative tests, work samples, situational assessment, prevocational exploratory courses, and the student's reactions to vocational skill courses and work experience situations. In order for the student to make a realistic career choice, he or she must be actively involved in the assessment process.

Careful consideration should be given to the selection of standardized instruments for use with handicapped students. The instruments must be valid for the purposes intended and reliable for use with students with particular handicaps. The benefit of standardized instruments is that they can be administered easily and economically. However, these instruments tend to have low predictive validity. Furthermore, many handicapped students must have verbal assessments or assessments that are not timed; or other accommodations must be made to get an accurate picture of their abilities or interests. Many of the more severely handicapped students have had few work-related or social experiences. The restriction of their previous experiences makes many of the interest inventories inappropriate.

One way of making standardized vocational instruments more appropriate for certain handicapped populations is to individualize the administration of the instruments and interpret the results on the basis of local criteria and knowledge of the handicapped individual. Such a procedure was developed in San Diego. The Vocational Assessment Center in San Diego has developed an interest inventory and a basic skills test. The *Slide Presentation of Careers (SPOC)* consists of a series of photographic slides taken of people performing a variety of jobs in the San Diego area. The student views the slides and indicates which of the occupations are of interest. The staff also designed the *Basic Readiness Skills Inventory* to assess the math and reading skills needed to work and live independently. The results of these criterion-referenced measures are used to develop instructionally relevant programs.

Many disabled students have incomplete or distorted perceptions of the world of work. The goal of the assessment process is to assist the individual to learn more about himself or herself in relation to the world of work.

An alternative to using standardized instruments is to assess a student's vocational interests and abilities through such techniques as performance observations, teacher reports, parent judgments, anecdotal records, and interviews with the student.

The Rehabilitation Training and Evaluation Program at the Rancho Los Amigos Hospital in Downey provides a vocational assessment that incorporates information such as medical and work history, family and social background, and ability or intellectual functioning level. To obtain further information about present functioning levels or intellectual capabilities, the staff observes the way in which a client behaves when attempting to complete simple tasks devised by the staff. Furthermore, staff members spend time discussing with the client his or her temperament style and how it will be a benefit or an impediment to different types of employment.

The assessment of a student's vocational interests and aptitude through the use of work sampling has become increasingly popular. Work samples are tasks or activities that simulate a specific job and are used to assess interests, skills, and abilities similar to those required in competitive employment situations.

Factors that adversely affect test scores are less likely to influence work samples: insufficient motivation, excessive anxiety, cultural differences, or language disabilities. Consequently, work samples may be a more appropriate in assessing the vocational skills and interests of many handicapped learners. Evaluators also believe that a more realistic picture of an individual's work potential is obtained

from work sample evaluation than from psychological testing.

The drawbacks of the work sample evaluation process are that the procedures tend to be expensive and time-consuming and that little useful information is provided that assists in instructional programming. Other considerations which may affect the appropriateness of using a work sampling process are the following:

- Tasks shown in the work sample system may not reflect occupations available within the community, particularly in rural areas.
- Tasks may represent only a few of the skills needed for a particular job. The staff members of the Career and Vocational Education Unit, Office of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools, analyze the skills needed for a particular job and expand the work samples to include additional skills.
- Typical mode of presentation (e.g., video or verbal instruction used in work sampling) may not be appropriate for many students who have difficulty following directions or have vision or hearing impairments.
- Few systems provide reliable or valid data for interest scores.
- Tasks are often one-trial measures which offer little opportunity to develop strategies to perform the tasks. Such factors as a lack of sleep, recent employment of friends, and problems with family or friends, which may affect the student's performance, are not taken into account by a once-a-year assessment procedure.
- Tasks are performed in controlled settings that do not accurately reflect the environmental conditions that exist on a job.
- A single-evaluator technique is emphasized, contradicting the mandates for input from additional personnel or instruments.

Nevertheless, the use of work samples is thought to give a relatively comprehensive picture of a student's vocational potential.

Centers that include work samples as part of the assessment process are the Vocational Assessment Center, San Diego; Career Assessment and Placement Center, Whittier; and the Career and Vocational Education Unit, Riverside.

In addition to paper and pencil instruments and work samples, data are collected through job performance assessments. Efforts have been made to focus the evaluation process as closely as possible on the work setting. Increased emphasis has been placed on using the regular vocational skill courses and exploratory and paid work experience situations as assessment sites. Ruggenberg Career Training Center, Bakersfield, offers an on-going job performance assessment. At the Career Assessment and Placement Center in Whittier, students may visit a job or training site for a one-to-five-day work tryout to explore interests and vocational needs.

Examiner Expertise

Only a small number of vocational education specialists are adequately trained in vocational assessment or evaluation, and an even smaller number are trained to work with handicapped individuals. Regrettably, most preservice training programs in special education or vocational education do not prepare students for conducting a vocational evaluation. In fact, only a few colleges and universities in the U.S. offer programs in vocational assessment or evaluation of handicapped students. An exception is the vocational evaluator employed by the Career and Assessment Center, Whittier. That person has received specialized training and a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Stout, which has a graduate program with emphasis in vocational evaluation. However, most career/vocational education programs do not have personnel with graduate training in vocational evaluation.

Because so few trained personnel are available, many practitioners with diverse backgrounds and experiences have been used to perform vocational assessments. For example, the Vocational Assessment Center, San Diego City Unified School District, uses graduate student interns from the Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling Department at San Diego State University to conduct assessments. Vocational assessments are performed by assessment technicians with the assistance of the occupational assessment counselor at the Career and Vocational Education Unit, Office of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools. The assessment technicians are paraprofessionals who were trained by the counselor to complete informal and formal assessment activities. Interpretation and recommendations are the major responsibility of the occupational assessment counselor. In addition, the center staff has conducted in-service training programs that are designed to build the capacity of district level IEP teams to perform vocational assessments.

The Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, San Jose, has actively involved teachers and administrators in the assessment process. Through county sponsored in-service training programs, school personnel have been taught to conduct and interpret assessments and to develop career/vocational goals.

Unfortunately, only limited in-service training opportunities are available for personnel to improve their skills. In-service training programs should provide instruction in such areas as the theories of assessment and work adjustment, the labor market, the administration and interpretation of assessment instruments, the development of work samples based on detailed task analysis, and the adaptation of tests and instructional materials for handicapped persons.

Coordination of Services

Career/vocational education and special education programs, at both the state and local levels, operate separately. Administrators of these programs may hardly know one another. Furthermore, vocational rehabilitation is not considered to be a direct concern of the school system.

Each of the disciplines of special education, vocational education, and vocational rehabilitation include critical information that is important in the development of a quality vocational education assessment process. Furthermore, the participation and involvement of special education, vocational education, and vocational rehabilitation personnel in the development of the assessment program will help to ensure that the vocational needs and goals of handicapped students will be taken care of through an appropriate continuum of services. Many people are not aware that the services provided through vocational rehabilitation programs can contribute to the career preparation of handicapped high school students.

Vocational rehabilitation counselors at the Vocational Assessment Center in San Diego perform vocational assessments, interpret results, develop instructional recommendations, and participate in IEP meetings. Furthermore, a cooperative agreement has been formulated between the Department of Rehabilitation and the Department of Special Education, San Diego City Unified School District.

The Career Assessment and Placement Center in Whittier is a prime example of coordinated and comprehensive planning among personnel from special education, career/vocational education, and the State Department of Rehabilitation for the purpose of providing vocational education services.

Common Practices

An analysis of the information provided by site personnel revealed commonalities among the practices that were being used to address the career/vocational assessment of handicapped students. The following common practices are categorized according to the issues concerning assessment instruments, examiner expertise, and coordination of services.

Assessment Instruments

- To compensate for the limitations of assessment instruments, local educational agency personnel have developed instruments to meet their specific needs (e.g., criterion-referenced assessments that are related to specific tasks needed to complete a job and work samples that are representative of community employment opportunities).
- Emphasis is being placed on using instructionally relevant assessment instruments and techniques.
- Observations in a variety of settings and interviews with students and parents are being used to provide a more comprehensive profile of those being assessed.

Examiner Expertise

- LEAs are providing in-service training programs for psychologists, teachers, administrators, and other personnel involved in the assessment process to increase examiner expertise.
- LEAs are using interns and technicians to perform the assessments. Personnel with formal career/vocational assessment training interpret the results and develop the program recommendations.

Coordination of Services

- Collaboration among personnel from special education, career/vocational education, and the State Department of Rehabilitation has resulted in a comprehensive assessment and programming process.
- LEA administrators are bringing together vocational rehabilitation counselors and special educators so that career/vocational assessment is viewed and implemented as an integral part of the instructional process.

Potential Improvements

Site personnel identified potential improvements that might be made in the career/vocational assessment process. Those improvements concerned examiner expertise, assessment instruments and procedures, and coordination of services.

Examiner Expertise

- Communication of the assessment results to students, parents, and instructional personnel should be increased.
- LEA personnel should have more opportunities for educational training in the career/vocational assessment of secondary students.
- Competencies required to perform career/vocational assessment should be established.

Assessment Instruments and Procedures

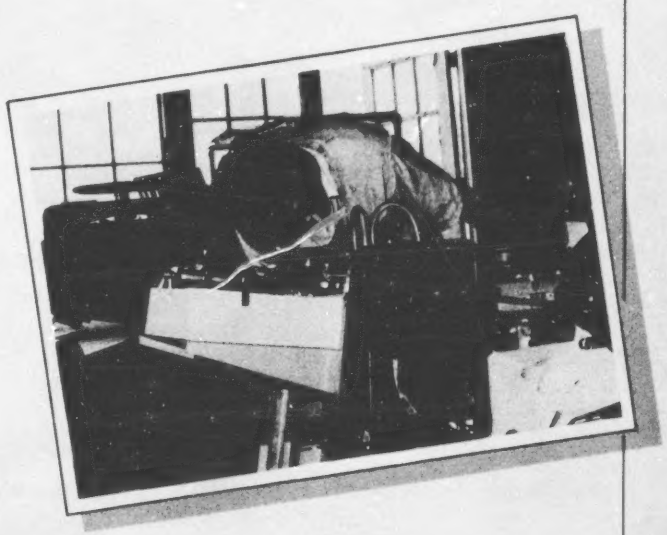
- Assessment personnel should solicit and increase the use of information provided by the classroom teacher.
- Increased communication with the student's parents is needed prior to and during the assessment process.
- Additional procedures should be developed to provide information concerning curriculum modifications, teaching techniques, and student learning characteristics.
- Time for visiting other quality sites and studying their assessment procedures would be helpful to assessment personnel.
- Selection of assessment instruments (e.g., work samples) should be more closely linked to the identified interests and strengths of the student.

Coordination of Services

- The roles of the special education teacher, the vocational rehabilitation counselor, and the vocational teacher in the assessment process should be clarified.
- Links between assessment results, curriculum development, and implementation of individualized education programs should be strengthened.

Other

- Career and vocational education services, including assessment, should be initiated earlier in the student's education program.



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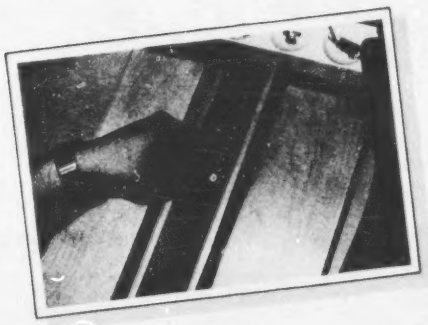
Career Assessment and Placement Center, Whittier



Contacts

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William Bramlett, Psychologist
Linda Tyler, Vocational Evaluator

Critical Issues

Assessment Instruments and Procedures (work samples, work tryout)

Examiner Expertise (university trained vocational evaluator)

Coordination of Services (coordinated planning between several departments)

Program Description

The Career Assessment and Placement Center is a joint effort of the Whittier Union High School District, the Whittier Area Cooperative Special Education Program, and the California State Department of Rehabilitation. Started in December of 1979, the center provides services to individuals who have been diagnosed as having a physical, mental, or emotional disability, who have minimal self-care skills, and who are junior high school age or older.

Twenty-three staff members provide the following services:

- Career education experiences that introduce the world of work to special needs students at the elementary, junior high, and senior high school levels
- Vocational counseling designed to assist students and parents in developing vocational goals, to coordinate services, and to follow up after students are placed in jobs
- Vocational evaluation to identify systematically feasible vocational objectives for a client (Information obtained through the evaluation process is shared with all appropriate parties and used to develop the vocational plan.)
- Work adjustment services provided on an individual or small-group basis (Instruction in areas such as job seeking skills or mobility training or academic tutoring may be provided at the center, at a job training site, at the school, or at the employment site.)

- Independent living skills instruction provided in a combination of classroom and community experiences (Areas covered include mobility training, consumer skills, community awareness, homemaking skills, communication skills, and leisure time activities.)
- Job development and placement

Background of Problem

The initial problem was the lack of valid vocational education experiences for the special education population in the district. Program emphasis was on the provision and/or coordination of comprehensive services to assist handicapped persons in reaching their optimum functioning level. This required that the vocational plan and services provided for each student be highly individualized. A comprehensive evaluation was considered a prerequisite to the development of the vocational plan.

Description of Practice

The practice involves a systematic comprehensive vocational evaluation that is designed to assist clients to identify realistic vocational goals. The assessment process involves the following procedures:

- First, the client is interviewed to identify previous work experiences, interests, work needs, and job expectations.
- Psychological tests may be administered to obtain additional information about the individual's intelligence, academic achievement, personality characteristics, interests, and aptitudes.
- Then, the client selects tasks of interest from work samples in a variety of job areas. The client's performance on and attitude toward each work sample are noted.
- The client may visit a job or training site for a one-to-five-day work tryout to explore interests and vocational needs.
- Finally, a staff meeting is held to discuss the results of the evaluation and to develop the vocational plan. The evaluator, classroom teacher, vocational counselor, referral source, parents, and client may all attend as appropriate.

Implementation/ Maintenance

Directors of vocational education, special education, and the consortium reviewed the services provided for special education students. They determined through a needs assessment that no coordination of effort was taking place. No plan existed for securing vocational education and state administrative funds.

The committee met with a rehabilitation consultant who suggested that they hire a rehabilitation coordinator. A coordinator was hired in October, 1979, following a national search. The coordinator selected a staff, and the center was opened in December, 1979.

Outcomes

- The vocational plan is based on a combination of student aptitude, interests, and performance characteristics.
- The vocational plan is developed by individuals who have a thorough knowledge of the student.
- Student progress is monitored every two weeks.
- Students receive individualized services until they are placed in a job.

Resources Required

Staff

- Program coordinator—with solid background in rehabilitation services
- Career educators
- Vocational counselor
- Vocational evaluator, with specialized training and a master's degree in vocational evaluation
- Work adjustment/resource specialist
- Independent living skills instructor
- Rehabilitation personnel on site
- Job development/placement specialist
- Psychologist
- Vocational technicians

Equipment

Work sample stalls

Training

Emphasis on staff having rehabilitation experience or special education background.

Funds

The annual budget for the project is approximately $700,000. Approximately $150,000 to $200,000 was used for initial set-up. Approximately $100,000 a year is needed for staff salaries and materials and equipment costs. Sources of funds include:

- Vocational education (Public Law 94-482)
- Rehabilitation counseling services
- Career Education, Incentive Act Grant (in-service training)
- ESEA, IV-C, Replication Grant
- Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA)
- State rehabiliation funds for adult clients

Suggestions for Improvement

- Vocational evaluators need to be skilled observers and be firm and critical in evaluation because they take on the role of the employer in the training situation.
- A maximum of 15 students can be accommodated during the evaluation period.
- The vocational evaluator should have a master's degree in vocational evaluation.
- The earlier the initiation to careers and vocational education the better; therefore, movement toward involvement in lower grades (elementary) is recommended.

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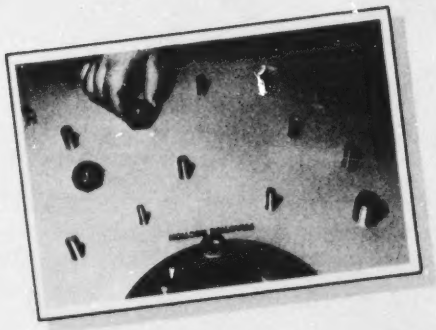
Practice Verified By

Site visit on March 25, 1981
Janice Frost, RRC Interviewer
Lyn Starr Anderlini, RRC Interviewer

Career and Vocational Education Unit, Division of Special Schools and Services, Office of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools, Riverside



Contacts

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Patricia Barrett, Career and Vocational Education Resource Specialist
Alan Schwerdt, Career and Vocational Education Resource Specialist

Critical Issues

Goal of career/vocational assessment; assessment as a guidiance process

Assessment instruments and procedures; work samples representing extensive job analysis

Examiner expertise; use of paraprofessionals to conduct assessments

Program Description

The Career and Vocational Education Unit serves junior and senior high school students with various disabilities, including mental retardation, sensory impairments, and orthopedic handicaps and cerebral palsy.

The service is funded through the California State Department of Education. The program is operated by the Office of the Riverside County Superintendent of Schools, Division of Special Schools and Services, and is in its third year of operation.

The staff consists of:

- One coordinator (county)
- One occupational assessment counselor (county)
- Three career/vocational education resource specialists (county)
- Two career/vocational education specialists (district)
- Two assessment technicians (county)
- Two teacher aides (one with county; one with district)
- Secretary

The Career and Vocational Education Unit is specifically responsible for the following services:

- Vocational assessment
- Career education
- Career and vocational curriculum development
- Staff development in the following areas:
  1. Vocational assessment
  2. Job placement
  3. Career and vocational education
  4. Job training
  5. Vocational skill building
  6. Vocational curriculum development

Eighty percent of the students assessed by the staff are enrolled in the 126 county-operated programs. The other 20 percent assessed are students enrolled in 16 district high schools.

Background of Problem

A large number of secondary-school level students with exceptional needs were not included in career and vocational education programs. State and federal mandates provided the impetus for developing and improving career and vocational education assessment and programming for these students.

Many of the students enrolled in county-operated programs and in district high schools had distorted or minimal awareness of their career/vocational potential and of the world of work. Therefore, the goal of the occupational assessment counselor and the career/vocational resource specialists was to design an assessment process which would be focused on developing potential and on building skills.

Description of Practice

The practice is a career/vocational assessment designed as a guidance process which provides the student with information about his or her potential and about the world of work. This assessment process is viewed as an integral part of programming and is interactive with instruction. The commitment of the staff is to the development and refinement of an ongoing assessment process which will do the following:

- Provide the student and parents with information valuable for further investigation of the world of work.
- Provide the assessment and instructional staff with information useful in developing a program or curriculum which is of interest and lasting importance to the student.

The assessment is performed by two assessment technicians under the direction of the occupational assessment counselor.

Prior to formal assessment, the staff requests the teacher's observations of the student's ability to attend to and complete tasks as well as observations of his or her social behavior. The teacher's observations of the student's physical stamina are also recorded. The information is reviewed, and an appointment with the student is scheduled. The student is interviewed to determine his or her interests, expectations, and work experience.

The information gained from the teacher's observations and the student interview assist the counselor in the selection of the assessment

instruments. Another factor influencing the selection of assessment instruments is the student's potential for community employment.

Different assessments are performed with students who will be working in community versus noncommunity settings, such as sheltered workshops. Regardless of the student's employment potential, the vocational interests and abilities of all students are assessed.

Interest inventories are administered before assessments are made of ability. This practice is followed to encourage the student to consider and to explore a wide range of occupations. An interest inventory, which is administered to students with a reading level of at least fourth grade and the potential for community employment, is the *California Occupational Preference System (COPS).* To assess the prerequisite skills or potential of these students to perform in various occupations, the staff uses the *Career Ability Placement Survey (CAPS).* This occupational ability assessment is often supplemented with a measure of physical dexterity, such as the *Minnesota Rate of Manipulation Test* or the *Purdue Pegboard.*

Students who have a reading level below the fourth grade and who have the potential for community employment are administered one or more of the following interest inventories:

- *Wide Range Interest Opinion Test (WRIOT)*
- *Pictorial Inventory of Careers (PIC)*
- *Picture Interest and Exploration Survey (PIES)*
- *California Occupational Preference System (COPS)* (Questions are read to the student.)

To assess the vocational interests of students for whom noncommunity employment is the most feasible option, the staff relies on informal questions with emphasis on a counseling approach. Interest inventories performed with these students include the *WRIOT, Valpar-17 Prevocational Readiness Interest Inventory,* and an adaptation of the *PIC.* The *PIC* was adapted by eliminating the film slides, which require reading. Students were also instructed to respond "yes" or "no" rather than to rate the occupations on a five-point scale.

To assess the ability of these students to perform in various work settings (e.g, day care, work activity, and sheltered workshops), the staff uses the *McCarron-Dial* system and the *Valpar-17 Prevocational Readiness Battery.*

Work samples, which are used to evaluate a student's potential for specific occupations, are available on an as-needed basis. Valpar and the Micro-Tower work samples are available.

Once the assessment has been conducted, the counselor does the following:

- Reviews information gained through observation and the assessment instruments
- Reviews the scoring
- Requests any needed clarifications
- Writes instructionally relevant recommendations with input from assessment technicians
- Discusses the recommendations with assessment technicians and vocational resource specialists
- Sends recommendations to the referring party, resource specialist, psychologist, and coordinator (site principal)

The program coordinator, psychologist, or teacher presents the assessment results and recommendations during the IEP meeting. The occupational assessment counselor is available to the IEP team for additional consultation.

The career/vocational resource specialists assist the teachers to implement the career and vocational components of the IEP. The specialists provide assistance with prevocational curriculum materials, consultation, and staff development.

To prepare students for competitive employment, vocational skill building classes have been developed by the resource specialists.

Implementation/ Maintenance

The Career and Vocational Education Unit began operation in the fall of 1979. Public Law 94-142 discretionary funds enabled the staff to develop and implement the assessment process. Portions of the discretionary funds were used to purchase assessment instruments and equipment and to pay the salaries of the counselor and two career/vocational resource specialists.

The occupational assessment counselor interviewed professionals from the State Department of Rehabilitation, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act programs, sheltered workshops, private agencies, universities, and school districts. He also reviewed more than 160 assessment instruments and completed a review of the literature. As a result of this investigation, the counselor designed an assessment process which would direct students toward expanding their interests and strengthening their potential.

The process was pilot-tested and refined by the occupational assessment counselor with the assistance of the career/vocational resource specialists during a six-month period.

During the first year, the counselor designed a vocational assessment in-service training program for resource specialists, special day class teachers, and psychologists. The objectives of the in-service training program were:

- To build the vocational assessment skills of participants
- To increase the participants' understanding of the results of vocational interest and ability assessments

The objectives were achieved by providing each participant with an opportunity to assess ten to 20 students. As a result of this in-service training program, the vocational interests and abilities of 552 students were assessed. District personnel received 7,110 assessment protocols.

During this time the *Vocational Assessment Handbook* was developed. The handbook includes outlines of more than 60 common assessment instruments.

The use of a computer and a word processing machine has streamlined the scoring and reporting of assessment results. Staff members have increased their understanding of the significance of various test items and assessments. They are now able to generate more instructionally relevant information from the assessments.

Outcomes

The major advantage of the assessment process is that it is designed to be an integral part of an instructional process. A special feature of the process is the opportunity it affords students with exceptional needs to explore and expand their occupational interests and skills. In addition,

personnel from county-operated programs have expressed a more positive view of their students' vocational potential.

Evidence of the effectiveness of this assessment process is as follows

- A significant number of students with exceptional needs have been assessed (approximately 900).
- The number of students with exceptional needs included in career/vocational education programs has increased significantly.

Resources Required

Currently, the staff is using the county's computer and word processor as well as a microcomputer to norm, translate, and print the assessment results. The occupational assessment counselor estimated that it would cost a district $2,000 to replicate the assessment process. Two hundred students have been assessed annually for approximately $2,000. If a district was interested in using word and data processing, he estimated the initial costs would be approximately $25,000.

Suggestions for Improvements

Improvements in the assessment process could be made by doing the following:

- Strengthen the links between assessment results, curriculum development, and implementation of career/vocational education services.
- Increase the communication of the assessment results to the students, parents, and instructional personnel.
- Increase working relationships with other agencies (e.g., Department of Rehabilitation and Employment Development Department).
- Make more efficient use of data and word processing equipment.

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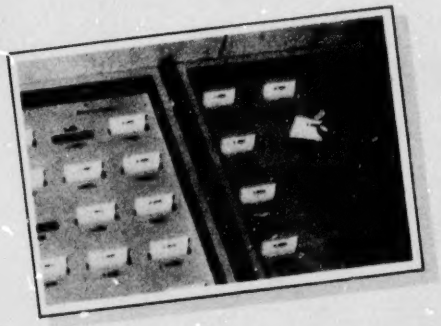
Practice Verified By

Site visit on January 19, 1982
Lyn Starr Anderlini, RRC Interviewer

Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools, San Jose



Contact

Joe Ovick, Director of Special Schools and Services

Critical Issue

Examiner expertise; training of teachers and administrators to conduct assessments

Program Description

The Santa Clara County career/vocational education program was designed by Bill Johnson, Coordinator for Vocational Education, to serve the needs of severely handicapped students enrolled in county-operated special day classes. Approximately 200 students are served by the program each year. Of the 1,700 students enrolled in Santa Clara County special day classes, 834 are between twelve and twenty-one years of age. Originally (in 1977), the program was limited to pupils enrolled in the county's severe delayed language/aphasic program and funded through local tax revenues and average daily attendance funds. Now the program serves all students enrolled in a county-operated special day class who can profit from a course of work experience education. Regular career and vocational education programs are also available to eligible students.

Background of Problem

Until 1977, students served by the Santa Clara County special day class programs were not (1) finding employment after graduation; (2) enrolled in work experience education programs; or (3) participants in any Comprehensive Employment and Training Act program within Santa Clara County.

At the insistence of students, parents, teachers, and administrators, a career and vocational education service delivery system was developed. This delivery system necessitated the writing of a work experience education plan and a career/vocational education handbook. In 1978 this state-approved plan was implemented by the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools. The plan is still operating, as written, and has not been modified significantly since 1978.

Description of Practice

This practice is an assessment which is an integral part of an ongoing counseling and guidance process. Vocational assessment is available to students enrolled in Santa Clara County special day classes, beginning at age twelve. Students may request to take one or more of the assessments during the school year. The assessment process continues until the student has identified a meaningful occupational goal. All assessment instruments (hardware and software) are controlled and managed through the county's central office and are rotated on a regular basis among the county's special day class programs. Vocational assessment instruments used in Santa Clara County are norm-based on the average working population and not on any given mental or physical disability. When an assessment instrument is selected for use, it is selected on the basis of the guidance needs of the individual student.

Assessment is woven throughout a five-step plan for the delivery of career and vocational education. The first step, described as *assessment* or *awareness,* includes the administration and interpretation of selected standardized diagnostic and/or county-developed evaluation instruments, usually administered by the school psychologist or teacher to assess vocational aptitudes and interests. These instruments include the *HESTER Evaluation System, Phoenix Ability Survey System, General Aptitude Test Battery, Developmental Aptitude Test, Box Score Form A and B,* and the *Student Vocational Data Sheet.* The Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools considers step one an informal data gathering awareness phase in the counseling and guidance process.

The second step, *career education,* includes the phases of awareness and exploration. Those who performed the initial assessment meet to review and discuss the data with the student, the parents, teachers, and others, such as a vocational rehabilitation counselor. Through this counseling and guidance discussion, the student learns about his or her present abilities, aptitudes, and interests as they relate to the world of work. The exploration of the world of work is provided through the county-operated Exploratory Work Experience Education Program.

The Exploratory Work Experience Education Program is a combination of related instruction (special day class) and structured nonpaid occupational experiences (worksite) designed to assist the student in his or her career development. Each occupation explored by a student is selected on the basis of his or her assessed occupational traits and interests. For the exactness of this exploratory experience to be facilitated, all occupations considered must be identified in the "Occupational Outlook" section of *Annual Planning Information,* prepared by the Coastal Area Labor Market Information Group, California State Employment Development Department, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment, and Training Administration.

The third step, *special class vocational programs/services,* is commonly referred to as the exploration and orientation phase. This phase consists of exploratory vocational programs and services which are designed to do the following:

- Provide the student with an orientation to vocational education.
- Assist the student to focus his or her occupational goals on certain aspects of the world of work.
- Guide the student in the selection of a meaningful occupational goal.

During this phase of the process, the student examines closely those clusters of occupations in which he or she is interested and begins to develop elementary job-entry skills through participation in one or more of the following nine subprograms of instruction:

- Agricultural education
- Distributive education
- Health occupations
- Home economics
- Industrial arts education
- Office occupations
- Technical education
- Trade and industrial occupations
- Work experience education

The occupations available are matched with the employment market in Santa Clara County as described by the Employment Development Department.

The two remaining steps in Santa Clara's five-step plan for delivery of career and vocational education are Step 4, *mainstreaming vocational programs and services;* and Step 5, *follow-up activities.*

The staff members at the Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools are not aware of any discriminatory aspects inherent in any of their assessment instruments. The county staff trains and certifies the teachers, psychologists, and aides who administer each assessment instrument.

Implementation/ Maintenance

Factors which have contributed to the implementation of this assessment process include strong student, parent, teacher, and administrative support. Administrative support for this process has existed for five years and reflects a strong county commitment to vocational education. Various funding sources have supported the development and implementation of this process, including Public Law 94-142 discretionary funds for vocational education. However, funding has largely been accrued from average daily attendance and local tax revenues.

The only change in this process has been an increase in active participation by pupils, parents, teachers, and administrators in the design of the career/vocational education component of the individualized education program.

Teachers are able to complete and interpret assessments as well as help develop career/vocational goals. Assessment is not considered an external activity, but is an integral part of the education process.

Outcomes

Since 1978 Santa Clara County has shown a steady growth in competitive employment for its graduates. From 1979 through 1980, 59 students found competitive employment. In 1980-81, 172 students were enrolled in some form of work experience education (152 students were in paid work experience programs and 20 were in nonpaid work experience programs). All students receive career or vocational guidance and counseling. Secondary students who are served by Santa Clara County are provided with a maximum opportunity to find employment or further training after graduation.

A major advantage of this process is that the student is assessed and receives instruction in occupations which are found within Santa Clara

County. Another advantage is that other agencies, such as the Department of Rehabilitation, Employment Development Department, CETA Prime Sponsors, San Jose Chamber of Commerce, HOPE Rehabilitation Services, and Goodwill Industries, use this assessment process in conjunction with the Office of the Santa Clara County Superintendent of Schools.

An unexpected result of this program is that employers in Santa Clara County want to use the assessment data in their ongoing internal personnel hiring practices. Employers are very supportive of the Santa Clara County special day classes. They feel that, if other agencies were to use the data, there would be a continual flow of information from the school to the employer. Also, students would experience a smoother transition from school to the world of work.

Students are encouraged to reach their potential. They are not programmed into jobs on the basis of someone else's expectations.

Resources Required

Bill Johnson estimates that the resources needed to replicate this process are as follows:

1. Supplies: $10,000—$12,000
2. Salaries: $30,000—$35,000
3. Staff training: $2,000—$3,000
4. Transportation: $1,000—$2,000

To set up a program similar to the one in Santa Clara County, initial capital outlay expenditures might involve an investment of $12,000. One staff member would have to be hired to implement the program. However, after the first year this program could be self-operating and the staff member would not need to be assigned to the program full time. A unique part of this program is that teachers implement the assessment process, thus making it self-sustaining.

Learnings

One improvement in the process would be the establishment of a central location for the county's assessment instruments. This would provide a site for students to go to for assessment. The most important part of this process is that it requires the participation of administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Because the assessment is an interdependent process, it has become a part of the total education delivery system.

For Further Information Contact

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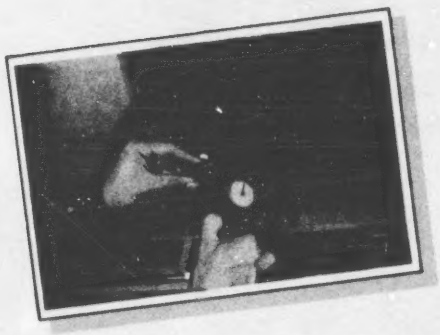
Practice Verified By

Site visit on January 5, 1982
Gail Zittel, RRC Interviewer

Rancho Los Amigos Hospital, Rehabilitation Training and Evaluation Program, Downey



Contacts

Gene Bruno, Program Director
A. G. Garris, Assistive Device Consultant

Critical Issues

Goal of career/vocational assessment; assessment as a self-learning process

Assessment instruments and procedures; techniques to assess client's temperament style

Program Description

Located at Rancho Los Amigos Hospital in Downey, the Rehabilitation Training and Evaluation Program is one of a variety of related programs which serve severely handicapped or traumatically injured and disabled persons at the hospital. The Training and Evaluation Program was instituted in 1975 to provide support to the State Department of Rehabilitation's staff serving clients with severe handicaps.

The program personnel provide the following services:

- Total mobility evaluation (including both driver evaluation and wheelchair evaluation and mobility aids)
- Work site evaluation
- Assistive devices consultation
- Adaptive behavior assistance
- Training of department staff and others
- General consultation regarding services to clients with severe disabilities

The staff consists of a project director, a rehabilitation engineer, an occupational therapist, a physical therapist, an assistive device consultant, a training/evaluation coordinator, counselor or psychologist, speech and language specialist, and a secretary. The specialized background of the staff is unique and diverse.

The program involves the training of approximately 200 rehabilitation counselors and 200 community members to assess clients' needs

annually. Approximately 40 hard-to-diagnose clients participate in on-site evaluations each month.

Background of Problem

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Public Law 93-112) required the Department of Rehabilitation to serve the severely handicapped population. This population requires comprehensive evaluations for independent living, mobility assistance, driving, engineering aids and devices, and vocational direction. The Training and Evaluation Program was instituted to meet this need.

Description of Practice

The practice involves a systematic inductive process that incorporates assessment of client's work temperament. The purpose of the evaluation is the determination of a vocational goal.

The evaluation includes a functional analysis of the client's capabilities which requires such information as a medical history, family and social background, work history, aptitude or intellectual functioning, geographical considerations, and present functional limitations. Many observations are derived from simple, in-office tasks devised by the staff. Referral of clients to specific specialists is made when additional information is necessary. One or more task analyses may be performed to obtain specific information regarding such skills as gait stability, touch recognition, or communication skills.

The assessment extends beyond an evaluation of job performance into an evaluation of all aspects of daily living. For instance, aspects such as mobility, driving assistive devices, and family attitudes toward work are all considered. Additionally, geographic limitations are considered.

Emphasis is placed on assessment of the client's temperament style. Information is gained from discussions with the client and from the client's previous work history. Values clarification or vocational interest measures may be administered. A major concern of the evaluation team is matching the client's temperament with the job. Client input is sought throughout the assessment process, and the client is viewed as the primary decision maker. Upon leaving the Rehabilitation Training and Evaluation Center, the client receives a recommendation for future employment goals and a plan for obtaining assistive devices, equipment, or modifications that may be necessary for job success.

Implementation/ Maintenance

Initially, emphasis was placed on the job and modifications required for employment. Today, the philosophy and practice have shifted to an emphasis on client temperament and analysis of the occupational environment. The physical limitations of the client are considered secondary to the temperament requirements. Staff members indicate that more study is needed on ways to match the temperament of the person to specific occupations.

The quality of the assessment process is, in many ways, the result of the quality and dedication of the staff involved. Knowledge of many related facets (e.g., engineering, medicine, employment needs) is necessary to direct the assessment. Most importantly, staff must be creative in their recommendations. Difficulties in retaining and hiring capable staff exist as a result of low state salaries.

Outcomes

The advantages of the practice are:

- Emphasis on client temperament as the major factor in matching a job with a person has increased client involvement in the process.
- The relatively simple inductive approach to evaluation has resulted in increased self-confidence among the counselors and professionals trained in the program.
- A high percent of clients evaluated have become employed.
- The process is cost-effective as information needs are analyzed, and only relevant information is sought.

Resources Required

Staff

Training/evaluation coordinator
Occupational therapist
Physical therapist
Rehabilitation engineer
Speech and language specialist
Counselor or psychologist
Mobility specialist
Assistive device consultant

Equipment (examples)

Springs-pressure devices
Fisher's scale
Classroom materials

Materials

Tests as needed (Not heavily relied upon)

Funds

Estimated funds for a school to replicate this process are as follows:

One full-time position: $26,000 per year
Contracted services: $15,000 per year
Equipment and supplies: $3,000 per year

Suggestions for Improvement

Vocational assessment is a combination of art and science. The most important aspect of the process is matching the information gained from the assessment process with careers and jobs that are suitable for the individual client. This process is facilitated by the basic philosophy of the program, which is that the client knows more about his or her needs than anyone else. The role of the staff is to assist the client, using knowledge and creativity. The client must be asked the right questions to elicit his or her own solutions.

For Further Information Contact

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Practice Verified By

Site visit on November 24, 1981
Gail Zittel, RRC Interviewer

Ruggenberg Career Training Center, Bakersfield

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Norm Hartnett, Counselor
George DeHart, Child Care
Jim Engle, Curriculum Director
Paul Sanchez, Furniture Refinishing
Butch Souza, Search and Serve, Special Service Director
Gary Schmidt, Transportation and Basics
Cindi Subaru, In-Service Training
Kathy Colsun, Adult School
Jim Provensol, Camp OKIHI, Outdoor Education Center
Fred Goodwald, Advance Career Training

Critical Issue

Assessment instruments and procedures; job performance assessments

Program Description

The Ruggenberg Career Training Center is a vocational education center for special education students. Started in 1972, the center serves approximately 400 students per year. The students, primarily juniors and seniors, are drawn from various school districts. Instruction is provided by resident instructors and by home-school instructors who travel to the center. Instructional aides also serve as bus drivers. Students may also attend regular career and vocational education programs if appropriate.

Two separate half-day programs are operated at the center. The morning program serves primarily students with more intensive needs, while the afternoon program serves primarily mildly handicapped students or those with special aptitudes. The core program involves instruction in a variety of job skills related to 12 occupational clusters (e.g., auto detailing, child care, dishwashing and food services, motel services, nurse's aide, and office skills). Instruction in the personal and social

skills necessary for successful employment is incorporated into the program.

Each student in the morning session participates in the instructional program until the student masters a task and has developed the necessary social skills. Then, the student performs the task in a community business. The student's performance is observed and, if adequate, is certified by the employer.

Afternoon students participate in the core instructional program for six weeks. They then participate in an individualized program to explore various job clusters. The student works with the counselor to select a cluster based on aptitude, interest, and previous performance at the center. After selecting a cluster, the student observes a wide range of jobs within that cluster. The student selects a specific job to pursue and observes a person on the job. The student then receives on-the-job training, which eventually leads to certification. A student may repeat the process and be certified in many occupations.

Background of Problem

Before the development of the center, vocational education programs were located at the home schools. Only marginal gains were being made by the students involved, and very few students developed saleable skills. A survey, taken over a five-year period, showed that 90 percent of the program graduates were unemployed.

The committee that worked to establish the center emphasized the need for a program that assisted students in developing job skills and in becoming employable. Emphasis was placed on the types of jobs available in the community. In the curriculum and in assessment, emphasis was placed on job performance.

Description of Practice

The career training center utilizes a systematic assessment process which emphasizes student interest. Prior to placement at the center, students are evaluated in their home school. A "Student Progress Evaluation" is completed by the instructor to identify observable performance in 14 areas. The instructor and career counselor jointly complete a "Student Need Referral" to diagnose strengths and weaknesses. Students also complete interest surveys to identify the proper area of vocational endeavor. These measures are used in conjunction with psycho-educational test data to determine classroom placement at the center.

Classroom performance is evaluated on a criterion-referenced basis. Students are rated by the instructors on task performance. Students move to progressively more difficult tasks as they accomplish prerequisite tasks. Students may be scheduled through tasks that are difficult for them. They are periodically evaluated on attitude and behavior characteristics (e.g., attendance, grooming, and observance of directions).

All students participate in field trips to various work sites to observe job requirements in work clusters of interest to the students. This unique practice exposes students to a wide range of vocational options. Students then select on-the-job training experiences based on this first-hand knowledge of their interests. The career counselor and instructors work with students to help them integrate knowledge of their individual skills with their interests. Students then receive on-the-job training in

the selected occupation. Students may participate in training in more than one occupation.

Implemenation/ Maintenance

The development of a job-related assessment procedure required that available jobs in the community be identified and that the program train and place students in these jobs. Initial information about available jobs was obtained through a survey of community businesses. Positive relations with local business personnel are essential to the job-training process. Public exposure to the program was provided through tours of the center and newspaper coverage. On-going contacts with employers help to maintain support for the program. Students receiving on-the-job training are observed twice a week by center staff.

Curriculum relevance was another important aspect of program development. Staff members chosen for the center were responsible for curriculum development. Each staff member spent a summer doing the job in which he or she was to instruct students. Thus, the curriculum and materials were the result of hands-on experience. In-service training was provided to assist staff in dividing activities into component tasks and in developing criterion-referenced assessment instruments.

The availability of adequate transportation is essential to the hands-on nature of the program. The center owns and operates a fleet of 22 station wagons and three mini-buses. This network allows students to visit a variety of job sites. The transportation is also cost-effective because aides double as bus drivers.

Outcomes

The advantages of the practice include the following:

- Students are involved in the assessment/placement process.
- Students have an opportunity to try out jobs that interest them.
- Students receive on-the-job training in the community.

Evidence of the program's effectiveness is provided by three surveys and follow-up studies. The results indicate that 50 percent of the students are placed in jobs they retain.

Resources Required

Staff

Career counselor
Field representative
Teachers (one for each six students)
Classroom aides

Equipment

Easily accessed transportation; replicas of motel rooms, hospital rooms, auto mechanic shops, and so forth; janitorial supplies, mechanical tools, and equipment; physical plant large enough to house students and the programs offered

Materials

Tests to supplement practical experiences

Training

Special education background with hands-on vocational education experience; credentials in either special education or rehabilitation

Funds

Sources of funds tapped in the initial development of the center:

- Department of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Vocational education funds
- Special education funds
- EHA VI-B funds

Suggestions for Improvement

Students must be considered the first priority. Students should be allowed to work at their own pace and not be placed in the job market until they are ready. Staff members must be willing to do everything needed to give support to the students.

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Practice Verified By

Site visit on March 18-19, 1981
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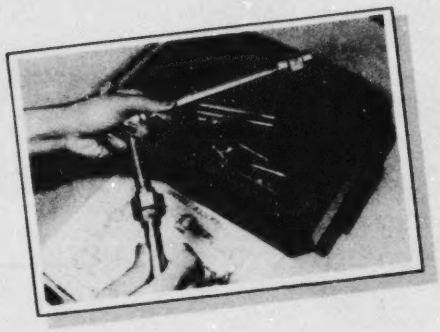
Lyn Starr Anderlini, RRC Interviewer

Vocational Assessment Center, San Diego



Contacts

Paul Loringer, Special Education Coordinator, Vocational Education

Mary Jo Hunter, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Critical Issues

Assessment instruments and procedures; interest inventory slide presentation, criterion-referenced basic skills inventory, work samples

Examiner expertise; graduate student interns to conduct assessments

Coordinator of services; cooperative agreement

Program Description

The Vocational Assessment Center serves all ninth grade special day class students enrolled in the Career Development Center. Both centers are part of the career development services of the San Diego City Unified School District and are housed at the Horace Mann Junior High School.

The Vocational Assessment Center staff consists of the following:

- A vocational rehabilitation counselor who is responsible for vocational assessment
- Four interns from the Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling Department at San Diego State University

The intent of the center staff is to assess the interests, skills, attitudes, and capabilities of the students in order to identify vocational goals and to recommend instructional strategies.

Districtwide staff members who are assigned to assist students to reach their career/vocational goals include:

- A vocational rehabilitation counselor responsible for job development and placement
- Six vocational rehabilitation counselors assigned to the high schools

Background of Problem

A majority of the high school students placed in special day classes were not included in the high school career and vocational education programs. The behavior of the students and their limited awareness of the world of work prevented them from participating in vocational education classes.

In 1978 a vocational rehabilitation counselor who was familiar with these problems submitted a request for state administrative funds to develop and improve career/vocational services for students with exceptional needs. The funds from the grant were used to buy assessment equipment and work samples and to pay the salaries of vocational rehabilitation counselors.

Description of Practice

The practice involves an assessment process completed for each student by a vocational rehabilitation counselor to provide instructionally relevant prevocational and vocational information which is implemented by special education teachers.

All students enrolled in the Career Development Center are assessed by the staff of the Vocational Assessment Center. Four interns and the vocational rehabilitation counselors assess 12 students every other week from September through May. During the week-long evaluation, the students spend three hours a day completing assessment activities.

Prior to performing the career/vocational assessment, the vocational rehabilitation counselor evaluates the information included in the students' cumulative folders. Particular attention is given to the nurse's assessment of the students' physical abilities and the teacher's assessment of the students' academic performance and social skills.

One week prior to the assessment, additional information is obtained through interviews with the students. Students are asked about their work experiences, interests, and leisure-time activities. During this period, parents are asked to complete the "Price Competency Checklist." This is a list of independent living skills. The parents complete the checklist by marking the extent to which the students have mastered each skill.

On Monday of the following week, the students complete the *Wide-Range Interest-Opinion Test (WRIOT)* and the *Becker Reading Free Inventory.* The staff members do not like these interest inventories because they do not depict the types of occupations represented in the community. (For this reason they are developing the slide presentation of careers [SPOC].) Once the interest inventories are completed, the students are assessed in basic social and prevocational skills. The *Basic Readiness Skills Inventory,* which is an adaptation of the *Brigance Inventory of Basic Skills,* is used as well as the *Social and Prevocational Information Battery (SPIB).* The *SPIB* is read to the students. The students are required to answer "true" or "false" to each item read.

For a determination of the students' temperament as it relates to a job setting, the *16 Personality Factor Questionnaire* is administered.

During the week the students are also given an opportunity to complete a number of work samples. The *Talent Assessment Program* is administered individually. The students complete the tasks at their own pace. Motor, spatial, numeric, and verbal skills are assessed with various *Micro-Tower Work Samples.* Eye, hand, and foot coordination are assessed with the *Valpar Work Samples.*

Throughout the assessment process, observations of the students' behavior are systematically recorded. Punctuality, attendance, ability to follow instructions, and social interactions are especially noted.

At the conclusion of the week, the vocational rehabilitation counselor and the interns discuss their observations and the results of the assessment. Interpretation of the informal and formal assessment data is summarized in a written report by the counselor. The report includes:

- A summary of the assessments performed and the results of each
- A narrative description of behavorial observations
- Recommendations for prevocational training to develop needed skills for a career/vocational area of interest
- Recommendations for vocational training based on the summary of interest areas and skills
- Options for high school vocational training; e.g., regional occupational program classes, academic or vocational classes, work experience, and exploratory experiences in the community

A meeting is then scheduled with students, parents, and teachers. At the meeting an outline of a plan for implementation of a vocational program is developed.

Prevocational training, if needed, is provided by the staff of 15 special education teachers at the Career Development Center. Students receive instruction in daily living and survival skills. The assessment process at the center is completed after the students have received this instruction. The students may remain at the center from one to five months, depending on individual needs.

When vocational recommendations are made, the vocational rehabilitation counselors at the various high schools assist with the implementation of the recommendations. If the vocational recommendaiton is placement at a work evaluation site, the students are videotaped to assess performance. The students view the videotape and receive instruction in needed behavioral changes and job-seeking and job-keeping skills from the vocational rehabilitation counselor.

Implementation/ Maintenance

The Vocational Assessment Center, designed to serve special education high school students, was opened in 1978. In 1979 the Career Development Center was established to expand services to include prevocational instruction for ninth grade special day class students. The staff members of both centers coordinate their efforts to ensure that instructionally relevant data are provided and implemented.

Initially, the dual responsibility for assessment and assistance with instruction was assigned to four vocational rehabilitation counselors. As the need for assistance with instruction increased, four additional counselors were hired. During this period the decision was made to assign the responsibility for assessment to one of the counselors and to place the remaining counselors in the high schools. Interns from the vocational rehabilitation counseling department at San Diego State University were assigned to assist with the assessment of approximately 175 students a year. One intern was also placed with each of the counselors working in the high schools.

In the fall of 1982, all ninth grade students were to be assessed and provided prevocational and vocational services in their local high

schools. As a result of budget cuts, the Career Development Center and the Vocational Assessment Center will be closed. Tentative plans have been made to purchase a mobile van which would house work samples and other assessment materials.

The van would travel to each of the high schools with special education students. A two-phase assessment process would be completed during a two-week period. During the first week an intern would work in the classroom with the teacher. He or she would help the teacher perform some of the assessments, such as the *SPIC* or the *Basic Readiness Skills Inventory*. After the paper-and-pencil assessment tasks are done, the student would complete selected work samples located in the van.

Outcomes

The advantages of the practice are as follows:

- Personnel from vocational rehabilitation and special education coordinate assessment and instructional services.
- Students are provided with an opportunity to build skills and explore vocational options.
- Interpretations of the results of the vocational assessments are provided to instructional staff.
- Students are better prepared to enter regional occupational program classes or vocational education classes.

Resources Required

Staff

Vocational rehabilitation counselor
Vocational rehabilitation counseling interns

Equipment

Work samples
Micro-Tower
Talent Assessment Program
Valpar

Materials

Price Competency Checklist
16 Personality Factor Questionnaire
Becker Free Reading Inventory
Wide Range Interest/Opinion Test
Basic Readiness Skills Inventory
Social and Prevocational Information Battery
Slide presentation of careers

Training

Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling Certificate
Pupil Personnel Services Credential

Funds

Initially, state administrative funds were used to purchase equipment and materials and to pay the salaries of the vocational rehabilitation counselors. Currently, the salaries of the vocational rehabilitation counselors are paid with district funds.

Suggestions for Improvement

Improvements in the assessment process might include the following:

- An increase in the participation of classroom teachers by having the teachers perform some of the assessments
- A focus on the identified strengths and interests of the student
- An individualizing of the assessment process by selecting work samples which are closely linked to the interest and strengths of the students
- An increase in the use of observational data provided by the classroom teacher

For Further Information Contact

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Practice Verified By

Site visit on February 10, 1982
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Appendix

Public Law 94-142, Section 615, states:

- Materials and procedures utilized for purposes of evaluation and placement of handicapped children shall be selected and administered so as not to be racially or culturally discriminatory.
- Materials or procedures shall be provided and administered in the child's native language or mode of communication, unless it clearly is not feasible.
- No single procedure shall be the sole criterion for determining an appropriate educational program for a child.

The rules and regulations, in clarifying and providing guidelines for implementing Public Law 94-142, set forth additional conditions for assessing children who may be handicapped. These include, among others:

- Tests and other evaluation materials have been validated for the specific purpose for which they are used.
- Such materials are administered by trained personnel.
- Such materials are tailored to assess specific areas of educational need, rather than provide a single general intelligence quotient.
- Tests are to provide a measurement of aptitude or achievement level, rather than reflecting the impairment (except where the impairment is what is being measured).
- Evaluation is made by a multidisciplinary team.
- The child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability (34 CFR 300.532).

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